

## Message Text

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PAGE 01 NOUAKC 01978 01 OF 02 291149Z  
ACTION AF-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 ONY-00 SS-15 /026 W  
-----097221 291154Z /41

R 271230Z AUG 77  
FM AMEMBASSY NOUAKCHOTT  
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 8013

S E C R E T SECTION 1 OF 2 NOUAKCHOTT 1978

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FOR AF/W - SMITH

E.O. 11652: GDS  
TAGS: PGEN, EAID, MASS, US, MR  
SUBJECT: INFORMAL REQUEST FOR INFORMATION ON LAY OF LAND

REF: (A) DIA 4410(TDG 232100Z AUG 77), (B) NOUAKCHOTT 1886,  
(C) NOUAKCHOTT 1894, (D) STATE 192022, (E) NOUAKCHOTT 1226,  
(F) DIA 5422 (DTG 252203Z AUG 77)

1. DESPITE RECENT TELEGRAPHIC AND FACE-TO-FACE EXCHANGES, WE ARE BEGINNING TO HAVE UNEASY FEELING THAT WE ARE NOT PRECISELY TUNED IN TO WASHINGTON WAVE LENGTH ON POSSIBILITY OF COMMERCIAL SALE OF MILITARY END ITEMS TO MAURITANIA AND ON DIRECTION DEPARTMENT WANTS TO GO ON FURTHER DEVELOPMENT OF PRODUCTIVE BILATERAL RELATIONSHIP WITH GIRM. HENCE THIS INFORMAL REQUEST FOR CLARIFICATION OF FACTS BEARING ON PROBLEM AND FOR READING ON COMPASS HEADING.

2. MESSAGE HAS COME THROUGH LOUD AND CLEAR (FROM RECENT WASHINGTON CONSULTATIONS AND FROM VARIOUS WIRES SUCH AS REF D) THAT USG IS NOT RPT NOT GOING TO PROVIDE MAURITANIA ANY ARMS, AMMUNITION OR MILITARY TRAINING OF ANY KIND WHATSOEVER THROUGH THE MILITARY ASSISTANCE PROGRAM (I.E., GRANT ARMS AID OR CONCESSIONARY SALES VIA FMS PROGRAM). MISSION AGREES WITH AND SUPPORTS

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THAT POSITION SINCE WE BELIEVE FRANCE SHOULD RESUME ITS TRADITIONAL ROLE OF PRINCIPAL MILITARY SUPPLIER, TRAINER, AND SUPPORTER OF MAURITANIA (AS IT HAS), AND WE HAVE PROCEEDED ON THAT CONVICTION SINCE OUTSET OF SAHARA WAR. AS COROLLARY, WE BELIEVE THAT US SHOULD KEEP OUT OF ARMS BUSINESS VIS-A-VIS MAURITANIA EXCEPT PERHAPS FOR OCCASIONAL COMMERCIAL SALE OF MODEST AMOUNT OF EQUIPMENT UNOBTAINABLE ANYWHERE ELSE.

3. WE HAVE ATTEMPTED TO COMMUNICATE TO INTERESTED WASHINGTON READERS THAT: (1) AMBASSADOR, EMBOFFS, AND MILATT HAVE RECENTLY INTENSIFIED EFFORTS FIRST UNDERTAKEN IN JANUARY 1976 TO MAKE USG DISINCLINATION TO GET INTO MILITARY ASSISTANCE PROGRAM BUSINESS WITH MAURITANIA CRYSTAL CLEAR LO GIRM OFFICIALS. WE MADE THIS POINT FIRST TO MINSTATE FOREIGN AFFAIRS OULD MOUKNASS IN JANUARY 1976 IN CONTEXT TURN-DOWN OF GIRM REQUEST FOR GIFT OF 200 50 CAL MACHINE GUNS AND LATER IN CONTEXT TRANSFER OF MAP EQUIPMENT FROM JORDAN. WE HAVE REITERATED IT AS OCCASION REQUIRED TO MINDEFENSE, CHIEF STAFF OF ARMEDFORCES AND OTHERS. SINCE ENNUNICATION OF NEW USG ARMS EXPORT POLICY IN MAY, MISOFFS HAVE INCREASED FREQUENCY AND INTENSITY OF OUR "REMINDERS" OXTUSG ARMS EXPORT POSITION. (2) NEW GIRM MINIDEF/CHIEF STAFF UNDERSTANDS AND ACCEPTS USG ARMS AID/EXPORT POLICY AS APPLIED TO MAURITANIA. HE HAS, MOREOVER, EXPLICITLY STATED THAT HE DOES NOT RPT NOT WANT ANY ARMS AID FROM USG, THAT HE WISHES ONLY TO PURCHASE FOR COLD (SAUDI) CASH A RANGE OF NON-LETHAL MILITARY END ITEMS IN STRAIGHT COMMERCIAL DEAL. QUICK REVIEW OF LIST MINISTER HAS NOW GIVEN US REVEALS ALL ITEMS DESIRED (SOFAR AS WE CAN DETERMINE, WITHOUT EXCEPTION) ARE ITEMS WHICH CAN BE PURCHASED AT SPORTING GOODS, CAMPING EQUIPYENT, AUTO PARTS, AND MILITARY SURPLUS STORES BY ANYONE WALKING IN OFF STREET. (ONLY EXCEPTION MINISTER DESIRES TO MAKE TO NON-LETHAL RULE IS CASH PURCHASE OF 50 CALIBRE MACHINE GUNS WHICH HE SAYS SECRET

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ARE NOT RPT NOT AVAILABLE AT THIS TIME FROM ANY OTHER SUPPLIER OR NATION. MINISTER HAS MADE IT EXPLICITLY CLEAR, HOWEVER, THAT HE INTENDS TO BACK OFF IMMEDIATELY FROM 50 CAL REQUEST IF THAT PURCHASE DESIRE POSES PROBLEM FOR USG NOW OR BECOMES PROBLEM LATER. HE DOES NOT RPT NOT WANT TO RISK PURCHASE OF US-MADE UNIFORMS, SHOES, ETC. (EQUIPMENT PURCHASED EARLIER BY FORMER AMBASSADOR ABDALLAH HAS THOROUGHLY IMPRESSED ENTIRE MINDEF AND MILITRAY STAFF) NOR RISK DEVELOPMENT SUPPLY RELATIONSHIP (WITH ITS IMPLICATIONS OF FRIENDSHIP AND SUPPORT OF US) DY PRESSING FOR A LETHAL PURCHASE. EXTRAPOLATING FROM USG WILLINGNESS TO ISSUE MUNITIONS CONTROL LICENSE FOR COMMERCIAL PURCHASE OF 50 CALS IN JANUARY 1976 AND INCLUSION NAME OF 50 CAL MANUFACTURER TWO WEEKS AGO IN REF D, WE HAD CONCLUDED THAT USG WAS AT LEAST WILLING TO CONSIDER THIS POSSIB- ILITY. NOW AFTER RECEIPT REF A, WE JUST DON'T KNOW.)

4. WE THOUGH WE HAD SPELLED OUT MINIDEFENSE'S UNDERSTANDING AND ACCEPTANCE OF USG ARMS AID POLICY AND HIS PURCHASE DESIRES CLEARLY IN REF C. BUT EITHER WE DID NOT COMMUNICATE IN FACT OR DIA AUTHORS AND STATE DEPARTMENT CLEARERS OF REF A WERE NOT READING REF B IN CONTEXT REF C. IN ANY EVENT, VIGOROUS AND UNCOMPROMISING REITERATION IN PARA 1 REF A OF MAURITANIA'S

INELIGIBILITY FOR ARMS DELIVERIES AND OF US DESIRE TO AVOID  
DIRECT INVOLVEMENT IN SAHAR DISPUTE (WHICH IN OUR VIEW WAS  
NEVER AT ISSUE), SUGGESTS THAT WE ARE NOT COMMUNICATING AND  
MAY INDEED BE WORKING FROM DIFFERENT DEPARTURE POINTS.  
(FORM OF QUOTATION PARA 1 REF A CONFIRMS WASHINGTON READERS  
MISSED KEY WORD: "CONTINUING".)

5. MIN DEFENSE NEITHER STATED NOR IMPLIED THAT HE WOULD  
EXPECT A CHANGE IN OR EXCEPTION TO USG ARMS AID POLICY AS  
QUID PRO QUO FOR SAM-7 MISSILE. NOR DID MISSION STATE OR  
INTEND TO IMPLY IN ANY WAY THAT WE THOUGH MINDEFENSE OR GIRM  
MORE GENERALLY WOULD EXPECT SHIFT IN US ARMS AID POLICY WHEN  
WE WROTE "MAURITANIA WOULD EXPECT RECIPROCAL MANIFESTATION OF  
COOPERATION AND SUPPORT AT SOME POINT IN FUTURE". MANIFESTATION  
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OF USG "FRIENDSHIP AND MUTUAL ASSISTANCE" COULD CLEARLY  
TAKE ANY ONE OF SEVERAL FORMS. NON-EXHAUSTIVE LIST OF POSSIBI-  
LITIES WOULD INCLUDE AT LEAST: CONTINUED AND PERHAPS EXPANDED  
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ASSISTANCE; REITERATION OF US GENERALIZED  
SUPPORT ON SAHARA IN UNGA CONTEXT; HIGH-LEVEL GESTURE OF INTEREST  
AND FRIENDSHIP TO SENIOR MAURITANIA OFFICIAL; WILLINGNESS TO  
PERMIT GIRM TO PURCHASE NON-LETHAL MILITARY END ITEMS IN US

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ACTION AF-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 ONY-00 SS-15 /026 W  
-----097144 291155Z /43

R 271230Z AUG 77  
FM AMEMBASSY NOUAKCHOTT  
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 8014

S E C R E T SECTION 2 OF 2 NOUAKCHOTT 1978

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FOR AF/W - SMITH

(INCLUDING TIMELY ISSUANCE OF ANY MUNITIONS CONTROL LICENSES WHICH MIGHT BE REQUIRED TO PERMIT CONSUMPTION OF COMMERCIAL SALES AND PERHAPS EVEN A MODEST AMOUNT OF INFORMAL/UNOFFICIAL COUNSEL ON TYPES AND SOURCES OF UNIFORMS, TENTS, SLEEPING BAGS, C-RATIONS, VEHICLE REPAIR EQUIPMENT, ETC.) SUGGESTION THAT US SUPPLY TECH DATA ON SAM-7 AND PBUNSEL ON EVASIVE TACTICS IN EXCHANGE FOR MISSILE PUTS US MUCH TOO CLOSE TO DIRECT INVOLVEMENT LINE, IF NOT IN FACT ACROSS IT, AND IS THUS CLEARLY OUT OF QUESTION.

6. IF AS REF A APPEARS TO INDICATE, NEW US ARMS EXPORT POLICY PRECLUDES MAURITANIANS FROM PURCHASE OF NON-LETHAL MILITARY ITEMS IN US FOR HARD CASH IN STRAIGHT COMMERCIAL TRANSACTION, AND/OR IF VIGOROUS REITERATION OF USG POLICY OF STRICT NEUTRALITY AND NON-INVOLVEMENT IN SAHARA (IN REF A AND ELSEWHERE) MEANS THAT US DOES NOT INTEND TO REPEAT ITS GENERAL ASSEMBLY SUPPORT FOR "MAURITANIAN/MOROCCAN RESOLUTION", THEN WE HAD PROBABLY BETTER RESTRICT OUR INTERACTION WITH GIRM TO STRICTLY ECO.8: \$3;3)90.3,5 \*83)\$, BE HIGHLY SELECTIVE IN ANY FUTURE ATTEMPTS TO PROMOTE MUTUAL POLITICAL ASSISTANCE IN MULTILATERAL DIPLOMACY AREA, AND FORGET COMPLETELY ABOUT ANY FOLLOW-UP OF ANY KIND WHATSOEVER ON PROFFERED SAM-7 MISSILE. WHILE MISOFFS ARE STILL REFLECTING ON PROBABLY  
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GIRM REACTION TO PURCHASE PROPOSITION IN PARA 2 REF A (PLUS ELABORATIONS IN REF F), OUR TENTATIVE CONCLUSION IS THAT US DECLARATION OF DESIRE TO PURCHASE PIECE OF EQUIPMENT WHICH HAS BEEN OFFERED TO US IN FRIENDSHIP AS GIFT WOULD BE INTERPRETED AS SUCH A DECISIVE REJECTION OF PROFFERED GOOD WILL TOLLD ULTIMATE RESULT COULD BE SIGNIFICANT COOLING OFF OF OUR ENTIRE BILATERAL RELATIONSHIP, WITH AN INEVITABLE SPILL OVER ONTO OUR DEVELOPMENT ASSISTANCE EFFORTS. FOR CONSIDERATIONS OUTLINED REF E, WE BELIEVE SUCH EVENTUALITY WOULD BE CONTRARY TO LONG TERM US INTERESTS IN NORTH WEST CORNER OF AFRICA. (NOTE: AS RESULT DISMANTLING OF TWO TIER CABINET -- AND REMOVAL OF MINISTATE SALAH FROM MILITARY/SECURITY OPERATIONS -- MINDEFENSE NOW REPORTS DIRECTLY TO PRESIDENT.)

7. BEFORE REACHING ANY FINAL CONCLUSIONS ON THIS CLUSTER OF ISSUES AND BEFORE MAKING FINAL JUDGMENT ON RESPONSE TO DIA MESSAGES, WE WOULD VERY MUCH APPRECIATE INDICATION OF AF/W'S APPRECIATION OF ISSUES INVOLVED (INCLUDING SPECIFICALLY WHETHER NEW US ARMS EXPORT POLICY PRECLUDES CON ERGIAL SALE OF MODEST QUANTITIES OF ARMS AND/OR AMMUNITION AND/OR NON-LETHAL MILITARY ITEMS TO MAURITANIA), A READING ON VIEWS OF OTHER PARTS OF DEPARTMENT AND REST OF "WASHINGTON", AND INDICATION OF WHERE US IS HEADING IN TIS RELATIONS WITH MAURITANIA. WE FIND IT DIFFICULT TO BELIEVE THAT SUG INTENDS TO BACKTRACK ON PUBLIC POSITION OF SUPPORT FOR MAURITANIAN/MOROCCAN SAHARA

POSITION PREVIOUSLY TAKEN IN UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY.  
BUT RECENT BETWEEN-LINES SIGNALS AND ONE OR TWO FAIRLY  
EXPLICIT COMMUNICATIONS FROM WASHINGTON SEEM TO SUGGEST THAT  
THAT IS REAL POSSIBILITY AND THAT OUR EVOLVING AND WARMING  
BILATERAL RELATIONSHIP WITH GIRM IS HEADED FOR THE COOLER IF NOT  
THE DEEPFREEZE.

HANDYSIDE

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## Message Attributes

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**Disposition Comment:** 25 YEAR REVIEW  
**Disposition Date:** 22 May 2009  
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**TAGS:** PGOV, EAID, MASS, US, MR  
**To:** STATE  
**Type:** TE  
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**Review Markings:**  
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